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ABSTRACT

Staff evaluation is a time-consuming and unpopular task but one of the most important responsibilities of a school principal. In the evaluation of school guidance counselors, Georgia's DeKalb County School System has developed an instrument for collecting information from assistant principals, head counselors, teachers, and students. By using the data generated from persons familiar with counseling services, a principal should be able to make a more valid and reliable evaluation of a counselor's performance. The process of evaluating school guidance counselors was divided into two phases: development and administration. The development phase provided representative counselors an opportunity to participate in the identification of criteria that were job-related. Following the development of the instrument, an administration phase established construct validity and provided a way to promote feedback for improvement of counselor performance. Competency areas included: Relating to Others; Communication; Professionalism/Ethics; Planning and Implementation; and Demonstrating High Expectations. Administrators, counselors, teachers, and students rated counselors on a scale of always, often, seldom, and never. Although no single instrument can incorporate all job-related behaviors, this counselor evaluation instrument includes behaviors shared by most counselors. (ABL)

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USING A CLIENT-CENTERED APPROACH IN THE PRINCIPAL'S EVALUATION OF COUNSELORS

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USING A CLIENT CENTERED APPROACH IN THE PRINCIPAL'S EVALUATION OF COUNSELORS

Staff evaluation is a time-consuming and an unpopular task, but it is, nevertheless, one of the most important responsibilities of a principal. Many states are now requiring the evaluation of non-teaching faculty along with teachers. Yet, with a principal's busy schedule, it is difficult to spend numerous hours in observing each staff member or in scrutinizing reports and records. In the evaluation of school guidance counselors, Georgia's DeKalb County School System has developed an instrument for collecting information from assistant principals, head counselors, teachers, and students. By using the data generated from persons familiar with counseling services, a principal should be able to make a more valid and reliable evaluation of a counselor's performance.

Because a guidance program is an expensive and valued service, leaders in the DeKalb School System wanted to ensure that counselors' performances were indeed meeting students' and teachers' needs as well as accomplishing the system's goals. As Weinrach (1975) pointed out, "It [the guidance program] is an expensive service which, if it is to meet stated purposes, must periodically take its own temperature." p. 202

The process of developing an evaluation instrument could be of importance to any school system, and the instrument itself could be used by any principal to evaluate the effectiveness of counselors. In addition, the findings from the DeKalb School System may provide a principal in any school with information that may be applied to the improvement of counseling services in general.

The Evaluation Process

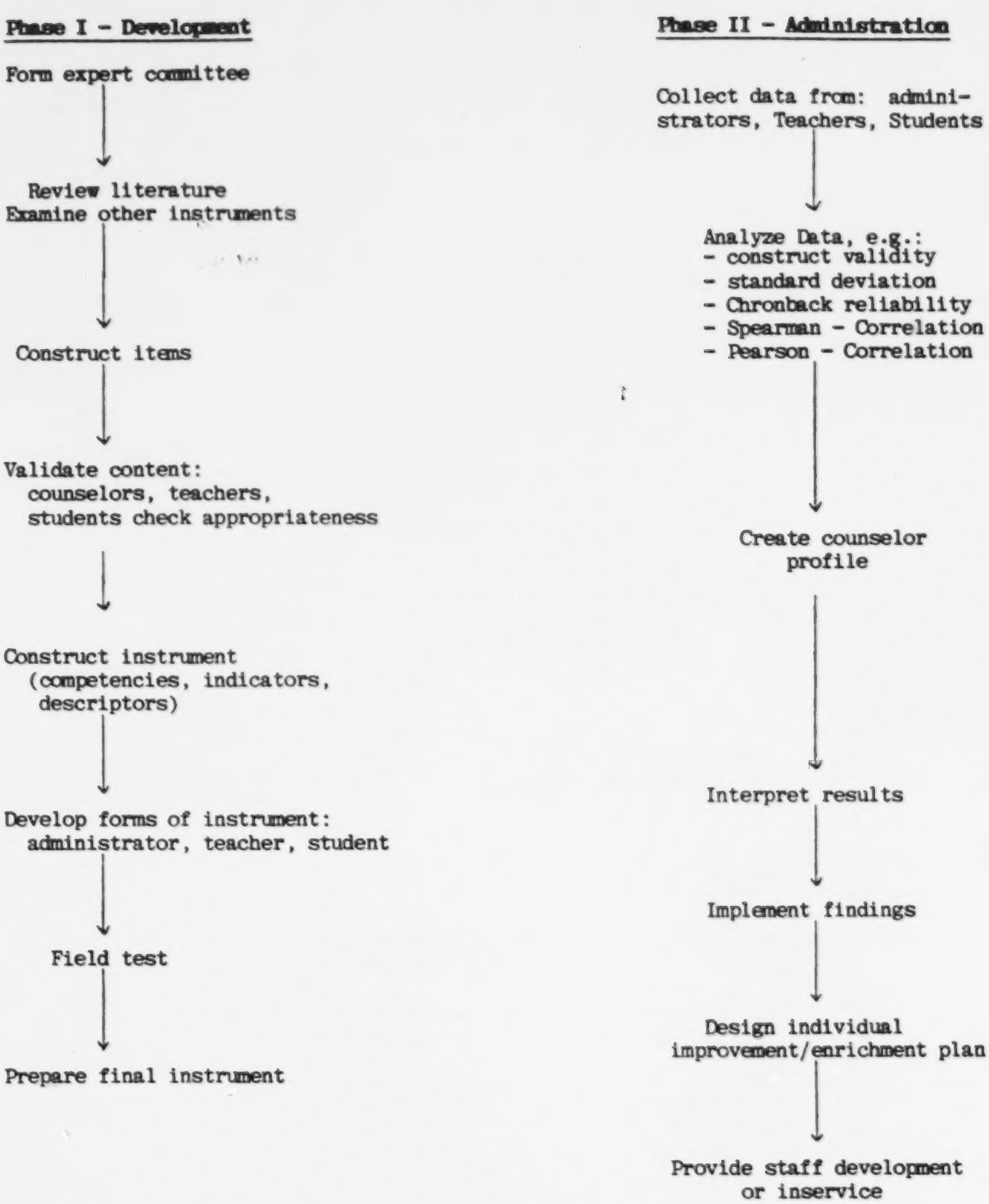
The major purposes for personnel evaluation are to recognize outstanding performance and to identify areas that need improvement. Evaluating counselors is the second phase in the DeKalb School System's assessment of personnel performance using a client-centered approach. School leaders were the first to be evaluated using teachers and supervisors as data sources. Media specialist and instructional coordinator assessment instruments, currently in development, also include the use of department chairpersons, teachers, principals, and students as data sources. The revision of the teacher assessment instrument to include students as data sources is in the developmental stage. A precedent, then, had been established in the DeKalb School System and was used as a model when developing the counselor evaluation.

The process of evaluating school guidance counselors was divided into two phases: development and administration. The development phase provided representative counselors an opportunity to participate in the identification of criteria that were job related. Following the development of the instrument, an administration phase established construct validity and provided a way to promote feedback for improvement of counselor performance. These phases and the activities which accompanied them are illustrated in figure 1.

Development of the Instrument

The first stage in developing the counselor evaluation instrument was to select a committee comprised of persons knowledgeable about school guidance and counseling as well as

FIGURE 1


Phase I - Development
Form expert committee
Review literature
Examine other instruments
Construct items
Validate content:
counselors, teachers,
students check appropriateness
Construct instrument
(competencies, indicators,
descriptors)
Develop forms of instrument:
administrator, teacher, student
Field test
Prepare final instrument
Phase II - Administration
Collect data from: administrators, Teachers, Students
Analyze Data, e.g.:
- construct validity
- standard deviation
- Chronback reliability
- Spearman - Correlation
- Pearson - Correlation
Create counselor profile
Interpret results
Implement findings
Design individual improvement/enrichment plan
Provide staff development or inservice

persons who benefited from the service. Pagano, Bernknopf, & Shultz (1979) recommended selecting a panel of experts on the assumption that job-relatedness would be inherent in the instrument if the judgments of persons knowledgeable of the school counselor's job were pooled. Although administrators and teachers were represented, the committee consisted primarily of counselors. Weinrach (1975) noted that it is important for counselors to play a major role in development of criteria so that they could be assured of a fair evaluation.

The committee members reviewed related literature and found, as had the American School Counselor Association (1981), that many of the existing instruments were evaluations of guidance services rather than evaluations of individual performance. Furthermore, most of the counseling evaluation models focused on evaluating program effects, designing staff development models, or evaluating counselors in private practice.

Content Validity

Based on concepts identified in the literature and their knowledge of a counselor's role and function, the committee formulated a list of job performance behaviors. Content validity was determined by asking all DeKalb School Counselors (N=66) and a sample of high school administrators and teachers to judge each performance behavior as either "appropriate" or "not appropriate." For a behavior to be considered as a potential item on the instrument, at least 80% of the respondents deemed it appropriate performance behavior.

Forms of the Instrument

Following the validation of the content, staff members in DeKalb's Research & Evaluation Department placed the behaviors into one of five competency areas: Relating to Others, Communication, Professionalism/Ethics, Planning and Implementation, and Demonstrating High Expectations. Each competency was then subdivided into indicators and descriptors. A sample of a competency, its indicators, and its descriptors is displayed in figure 2. Researchers were also responsible for final editing of the instrument.

This resulting form would be used by all administrators and by counselors for self-evaluation. Items were then derived from the administrator form to create the teacher and student forms. It should be emphasized that teachers and students were asked to respond only to how often they have observed behaviors, not to evaluate the quality of a counselor's performance. The evaluation was the principal's responsibility.

Administrators, counselors, teachers and students responded by marking one of the following ratings: A--Always, B--Often, C--Seldom, or D--Never. Some items on the teacher form concerned counselor responses to various teacher requests; therefore, these items carried instructions to "Mark E if you have never requested this service." To distinguish the forms from one another, each was printed on a different color of paper.

The student form was tested for readability in two schools with students at a variety of ability levels. All forms of the assessment instrument -- administrator, teacher, and student --

FIGURE 2

I. Relating to Others

A. Demonstrates Behavior Which Promotes Positive Relationships

1. Gives recognition and praise to students and colleagues.

2. Demonstrates courtesy to students and colleagues.

3. Demonstrates relevant personal knowledge of students and colleagues.

were then field tested in two schools. Although the results of the field test indicated that few revisions were needed, some items were clarified. The next phase involved decisions regarding methods and procedures necessary for efficient administration.

Administration

Methods and Procedures

Data were collected on all counselors from four sources: school administrators including the head counselor (but not the principal), teachers, students, and a counselor's self evaluation. Principals or their representatives administered the observation form to teachers (N=3,653). Teachers administered the student form of the instrument during homeroom. Students (N=21,771) completed questionnaires only for the counselor to whom they were assigned. The time required for completion of the teacher and student forms was generally 10 to 15 minutes. All respondents remained anonymous and results were confidential.

Results for each counselor were compiled and distributed to the counselor's principal. The principal received a profile on each counselor which included the following: (a) a summary of local and systemwide student responses to each item delineated by grade levels, (b) a summary of local and systemwide teacher responses to each item and (c) a counselor's self-assessment. A sample of a counselor's profile is depicted in figure 3.

In a conference with each counselor, the principal provided a copy of all data collected and reviewed the data with the counselor. Using the data from the four data sources --

FIGURE 3

PROFILE OF COUNSELOR ASSESSMENT DATA
FOR USE BY THE PRINCIPAL

Counselor's Name _____ School _____

COMPETENCY I - RELATING TO OTHERS

	Self					Principal's Evaluation (circle one)				
I-A Promotes Positive Relationships	A	B	C	D	E					
1. Gives Recognition and Praise	X					A	B	C	D	E
2. Demonstrates Courtesy		X				A	B	C	D	E
3. Shows Interest in Students/Staff	X					A	B	C	D	E
I-B Is Able To Mediate Conflicts										
4. Recognizes Conflict	X					A	B	C	D	E
5. Sensitive to Needs	X					A	B	C	D	E
6. Analyzes Conflict	X					A	B	C	D	E
7. Plans for Resolution of Conflict	X					A	B	C	D	E
I-C Willingness To Work With Others										
8. Available as a Resource Person	X					A	B	C	D	E
9. Encourages Student Referrals	X					A	B	C	D	E
10. Accessible to Faculty		X				A	B	C	D	E
11. Accessible to Students	X					A	B	C	D	E
12. Caring Attitude with Students	X					A	B	C	D	E

A = Exceeds Performance Expectations
B = Meets Performance Expectations
C = Needs Improvement in Performance
D = Not Observed
E = Not Applicable

COMPETENCY I SUMMARY

% of Total Student Responses (N=476) for this counselor that were Always or Often	71%
% of Total Student Responses Systemwide (N=21,771) that were Always or Often	76%
% of Total Teacher Responses for this counselor (N=82) that were Always or Often	78%
% of Total Teacher Responses Systemwide (N=3,653) that were Always or Often	72%

administrators, teachers, students, and self -- along with personal observations and knowledge, the principal then evaluated the quality of a counselor's performance. Principals rated a counselor's performance by circling one of the following:

A = Exceeds Performance Expectations
B = Meets Performance Expectations
C = Needs Improvement in Performance
D = Not Observed
E = Not Applicable

Profile data remained in the principal's files; a summary, by competency, of the principal's evaluation was forwarded to the system's personnel department.

Results and Discussion

The most significant finding was that totals of teacher and student responses in the "always" and "often" categories showed that the instrument discriminated among counselors' performances. Table 1 displays the range of scores. The discrimination among the scores indicates that it is possible for counselors to improve their performances.

Also significant was the high positive correlation ($r=.6205$, significant at the .001 level) between teachers and students responses. One can conclude that the instrument is reliable in discriminating among counselor's performances.

Each item (descriptor) was also correlated to the corresponding total competency scale. An item was judged to be a valid contributor to the scale if the correlation coefficient was significant. All items fell in the moderately to highly significant ranges of .4 to .9 (ranges suggested by Guilford and Fruchtler, 1978).

TABLE 1
COUNSELOR ASSESSMENT - 1986

Counselor-Name	School	% of Total Student/ Teacher Responses That Were ALWAYS or OFTEN
		82.30
		80.65
		79.85
		79.45
		79.25
		78.65
		78.40
		78.05
		77.00
		76.70
		76.65
Total Score - 1 Standard Deviation Above the Mean		
		76.40
		76.20
		75.70
		75.35
		73.95
		73.90
		73.20
		72.75
		72.70
		72.60
		72.40
		72.15
		72.05
		71.70
		71.70
		71.50
		71.25
		71.05
		69.60
		69.60
		69.45
		69.40
		69.20
		68.65
		68.65
	Mean.....	68.63
		68.60
		68.25
		68.00
		67.95
		67.85
		66.70
		66.10
		66.05
		66.05
		65.90
		65.75
		65.45
		65.45
		65.05
		64.15
		62.15
		61.40
		61.40
Total Score - 1 Standard Deviation Below The Mean		
		60.25
		58.55
		58.40
		57.65
		57.50
		57.05
		56.85
		56.60
		54.00
Total Score - 2 Standard Deviations Below The Mean		
		50.95
		44.05
		42.40

Student Responses

Systemwide student responses "always" or "often" were combined and the percentages of these were low in four out of five competencies. A composite of the systemwide scores is displayed in Table 2.

In Competency I, Relating to Others, specific areas that received low scores were praising students for their efforts, helping to solve conflicts, being accessible, and encouraging students to come and talk. These scores might indicate that either counselors are not available for counseling services or students are unaware that they can go to a counselor for help with problems. Whatever the reason for low percentage in that area, the need for staff development is obvious.

The lowest rated area by students was the Communication competency. Two of the three lowest rated items concerned visibility. This would indicate that students do not see counselors in places other than the counseling office, even though counselors had indicated through committee input and content validity that visibility was important.

Student responses concerning counselor Planning and Implementing behaviors were low in the areas related to college planning. These responses might indicate that either counselors assume that students in certain schools are not interested in college or students do not look to counselors for help in selecting colleges. Again, because counselors consider helping students with college planning an important part of their jobs, staff development might result in more effective help to students.

TABLE 2

COUNSELOR ASSESSMENT PROFILE - SYSTEMWIDE SUMMARY OF STUDENT RESPONSES
DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA, SCHOOL SYSTEM

N=21,771

		% of Always & Often Categories
I.	**Relating to Others**	
1.	Praises Me For My Effort	51.3
2.	Is Courteous To Me	84.4
3.	Remembers Things About Me	65.7
4.	Helps Me Solve Conflicts With Others	46.2
5.	Is Available Without An Appointment	54.1
6.	Encourages Me To Come/Talk	55.8
7.	Listens To Me When I Talk	87.2
8.	Assists Me When I Ask For Help	81.0
9.	Treats Me With Respect	86.8
10.	Cares About Me	73.9
II.	**Communication**	
11.	Provides Information - e.g. Tests, Meetings, Scholarships, etc.	62.2
12.	Is Visible Around The School	53.1
13.	Attends School Activities	47.5
III.	**Professionalism/Ethics**	
14.	Keeps Conversations Private	82.8
IV.	**Planning and Implementing**	
15.	Makes It Possible to Schedule Appointment	81.0
16.	Explains Test Scores To Me	52.2
17.	Enlightened Me As A New Student	60.2
18.	Provides Me Financial Aid Information	54.2
19.	Talks With Me About Career Goals	76.7
20.	Discusses College Requirements With Me	65.7
21.	Helps Me Find Information On Colleges	43.0
22.	Helps Me Select Courses For College/Career	67.9
23.	Can Answer Questions About School Subjects/Programs	77.6
V.	**Demonstrates High Expectations**	
24.	Encourages Me To Consider Appropriate Course Electives	69.4
25.	Talks To Me About My Grades	70.2
26.	Talks To Groups Of Students About Registration	54.1
27.	Encourages Me To Do My Best	71.2
28.	Encourages Me To Select Challenging Courses	62.4
29.	Encourages Me To Stay In Challenging Courses	61.6
30.	Is Receptive To My Talking About Personal Matters	53.5

Low scores in the next competency of High Expectations indicate that counselors did not always encourage students to do their best in a way that had a lasting impact on students. Researchers (Edmonds, 1979; Mortimore and Sammons, 1987) have stated that one of the correlates of an effective school is that faculties have high expectations of students. It would seem that counselors, especially, should convey that they expect all students to perform well.

Student responses indicated that counselors need to increase their performances in the areas of relations, communications, and expectations. These areas contain essential behaviors if students are to feel comfortable with and confident in their counselors. It may be that if counselors are aware of student perceptions and if counselors publicize available services, then use of their services would improve.

Teacher Responses

In the teacher form of the instrument, several items contained a parenthetical statement which would indicate that teachers had never asked for the specific information or for the required services addressed in the item. For example, in the systemwide results only 59% of teachers responded that counselors "always" or "often" helped with the student referral process. Yet 33% of teachers responded that they had never referred a student to that particular counselor. Table 3 displays a composite of systemwide teacher responses.

Based on teacher responses, counselors received low percentages in the area of checking on student progress.

TABLE 3

COUNSELOR ASSESSMENT PROFILE
SYSTEMWIDE SUMMARY OF TEACHER RESPONSES

N=3,653

	% of Always/Often Categories
I. RELATING TO OTHERS	
1. Is Courteous	94.7
2. Is Sensitive	76.3
3. Assists In Resolving Conflicts	65.3
4. Helps Teachers Refer Students	59.2*
II. COMMUNICATION	
5. Presents Information Effectively to Groups	77.1
6. Is Available For Consultation	89.7
7. Communicates Program To Staff	74.5
8. Has a Positive Attitude About The School	91.6
III. PROFESSIONALISM/ETHICS	
9. Maintains Confidentiality	92.2
IV. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING	
10. Supports Instructional Goals	91.2
11. Helps Interpret Test Scores	33.9*
12. Knows About Course Content	70.7
13. Checks On Progress Of Students	64.9
14. Makes Student Records Available	69.7
15. Maintains Up-To-Date Records	85.9
16. Helps With EMT Referrals	31.5*
17. Follows Through On Referrals	61.3*
18. Gives Feedback On Referrals	58.5*
19. Responds To Concerns	76.4
20. Helps Me Use Test Results	35.5*
21. Encourages Staff Consultations	76.4
22. Has a Positive Attitude About Students	90.4
23. Respects My Perception Of Students	88.0

*indicates at least 30% of teachers had never requested that service

Teachers observed most frequently that counselors were professional and ethical. A significant percentage of teachers reported that they had never asked a counselor for help or for advice in the areas of interpreting standardized test scores, referring students, and using test results to diagnose student needs.

The high percentage of teachers responding that they never requested specific services could have resulted for a variety of reasons. Further study would be needed to conclude simply that counselors are not performing a particular function. Possibly, teachers perform some of these services for their students, and, therefore, do not require those services from counselors. If teachers are, for example, interpreting test scores for students, then that function could be deleted from a counselor's responsibilities. On the other hand, teachers as well as students may be unaware of the services available to them from the counselors. Such interpretations and resulting improvement plans must be left to the principal and counselor.

Additional Uses of Evaluation

An evaluation of job performance can be used in a variety of ways. In the DeKalb County School System, the process does not end with the principal's evaluation. The principal, with input from the counselor, develops a written plan for improvement or enrichment to be implemented during the year. The improvement plan includes the following criteria: (a) a specific area where improvement is expected, (b) specific activities, (c) a time line for completing the plan, (d) resources, and (e) a plan for

monitoring progress. The enrichment plan assumes that the counselor exceeds performance expectations in all competencies and therefore specifies work in the areas that would be of personal and professional benefit. This plan may be written in any form that is meaningful to the counselor and to the principal. Thus, evaluation results are used to design an individual plan whereby counselors can improve their performances.

Furthermore, any areas of weakness can be the focus for staff development courses or inservices. Thus, a needs assessment stems from the results of the evaluation which would be useful to staff development departments and counselor supervisors.

In many cases, an extensive personal improvement plan may not be needed because the awareness can serve as a mighty stimulus for improvement. Counselors may need only to recognize that their efforts need to be directed to a particular area. In those cases, areas of weakness can be quickly remediated. For example, counselors could increase their visibility simply by making an extra effort to attend school-related activities.

Through the process of evaluation, counselors may become more aware of and sensitive to their roles and functions. Additionally, teachers as well as principals will become more aware of counselor services and make use of them. This broader knowledge of counselor services may initiate interaction between teachers, counselors, and principals which can increase the benefits from counseling functions.

Results from the evaluation provide a look not only at individual performance, but also at the school's total counseling program. Thus, the results can be used to make decisions concerning the program. If, for example, results suggest that teachers and students approach one counselor more than another, then duties may need to be reassigned. This building on individual strengths is another way to improve counselor performance.

In addition to planning for improvement of performance, it is possible to use the results from the evaluation to determine the reasons behind them. An astute principal knows when a problem exists with a staff member -- phone calls, parent complaints, frequent student visits. These maladies, however, are symptoms of the problem and do not necessarily indicate the cause. The results from a performance evaluation can be a valuable way to discover a symptom's origin.

Because the items in the evaluation are realistic expectations of a counselor whose performance is based on role and function rather than outcomes, the content can be used as a set of job expectations for counselors, especially for new counselors. Although the items are not a total job description, they can be used as a checklist to ensure that a counselor is performing necessary duties.

Summary

Although no single instrument can incorporate all job related behaviors, the counselor evaluation instrument described here includes behaviors shared by most counselors and identified

by counselors as valid performance expectations. Statistical treatments indicate that the instrument is valid and a reliable measure of counselor performance.

School Systems will find it difficult to continue evaluating non-teaching faculty members on items unrelated to job performance. A principal alone cannot be fully cognizant of how effectively a counselor carries out assigned duties and responsibilities. The use of a variety of data sources will allow the principal to spend less time in the evaluation process and make more accurate evaluation decisions about a counselor's performance. Furthermore, the results from the evaluation can be used as a benchmark for improving individual counselor performance and can provide information about the overall counseling program. Similar methods and procedures could be used in the evaluation of other non-teaching faculty as well.

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